and (b) No, Sir. The Government have *inter-alia* initiated the following steps to conserve, develop and optimally exploit the fisheries resources in the Exclusive Economic Zone of the country:—

(i) Enactment of Marine Fishing Regulation Acts for regulation fishing within territorial waters;

(ii) Optimisation of fishing fleet;

(iii) Enactment of 'Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972;

(iv) Observation of closed fishing season;

(v) Implementation of projects for mariculture and setting up of artificial feets; and

(vi) Development of patraol boats to monitor the regulatory measures.

Downward Trend of Oil Palm

767. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will th Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a downward trend of oil palm in th country;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the measurs taken to encourage oil palm farmers who are agitating for low price fixed by Government on their produce?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI S.B.P.B.K. SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) and (b) Annual area coverage under Oil Palm has declined from 10,231 ha in 1995-96 to 4,168 ha in 1998-99. Main reasons for this downward trend are:

(i) Adverse effect on the profitability of Oil Palm, due to the availability of large quantity of imported edible oil at cheaper rate;

(ii) Lack of processing facilities in Goa, Gujarat and Orissa.

(c) Government is implementing a Market Intervention Scheme in Andhra Pradesh to ensure that Oil Palm growers are paid

reasonable price of Oil palm Fresh Fruit Bunches (FFBs). Besides, to reduce the adverse effect of import of edible oil on domestic prices of Palm oil, Govenment has increased import duty on refined vegetable oils of edible grade (other than coconut oil, RBD palm kernel oil and palm stearin), in loose or bulk form from 16.5% to 27.5% with effect from 30.12.99.

Agri-Business consortium for small Farmers

768. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the composition and duties assigned to the Agri-business consortium for small farmers;

(b) which are the district in Orissa recommended by the Government of Orissa and for the current period;

(c) progress made in the first phase so far; and

(d) which are the other districts of Orissa proposed to be included?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI S.B.P.B.K. SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) The composition of the Board of Management of Small Farmers' Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC) is given in statement-I (*See* below). The duties assigned to the SFAC are given at Statement-II (*See* below).

(b) and (c) Nil

(d) Ganjam and Gajapati districts of Orissa are proposed to be taken up after finalisation of the plan by the Agriculture Finance Corporation Ltd.

Statement-I

Composition of the Board of Management of the Small Farmers' Agri-Business consortium (SFAC)

According to clause 7 of the Articles of Assocation of SFAC, there shall be a Board of Management consisting of 15 members. The Union Agriculture Minister shall be the President of the Board of Management and the Union Agriculture Secretary shall be its ex-